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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a review of research studies and theories involving sociodramatic play and its effect on the learning power of middle class children. Discussion centers on definitions, criteria, and principles of play, and ways for teachers to identify and encourage sociodramatic play in the classroom. Play, and especially sociodramatic play, is presented as an essential part of a child's learning process and a medium through which a child can express and organize his feelings. (ED)

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A LOOK AT A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY ABILITY OF HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN AND HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS WHITE KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN CONDUCTED BY VIVIAN A. ANDERSON

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A look at a photograph in Children Out of School in America, (24) bearing the caption: "Tell me, where do the children play," points out the value of this study, for as an experiment, it is telling us what all children need and must have in their patterns of growth and development.

These six lines of a poem assert this:

The young lamb leaps about the lawn,
The roving kitten rolls the yarn,
The young child squeals
And waves his heels,
All play.
We say.

Young animals like to play. Young children like to play. Play is their essential activity. Through this activity they develop healthy, stable, and secure relationships with those about them, and with others. All learning for the young is through play. Concern should be voiced, when observations reveal that children are having no fun in their play activities. Play is the chief ingredient in relaxation and motivation, and smoothes the way through the learning process.

A study of this investigation on the value of socio-dramatic play as it affects the learning power of middle-class children can be supported by many teachers and investigators.

Bower (3) intimates that middle-class children suffer greatly from lack of play opportunities, mainly, because of the "mind-set" of their middle-class parents, who only tolerate play as a "necessary evil" in the lives of their children. Their attitudes result from a transferance from a desire for the material things of the world to a desire for status in educational and personal achievement.

The thought that socio-dramatic play invites varied and many individual experiences for learning and acquiring competency in many developmental tasks is supported by Greene and Petty (25) who believe that dramatic play is associated with the home, and is a natural out growth activity, which children bring to school, and that through involvement in creativity the emotional and social growth emerges.

Agreement is found in the summary of a statement made by Chandler (5) who believes that the child uses imaginative play or make-believe as a means of making external things a part of himself such as---events, stories, people, animals, machines, and other things, and that if a child can re-create these things through the use of imagination, he has developed a viable way of understanding things, and that making-believe is a child's metamorphic way of escaping the limitations of his own age and small size by becoming whatever he is pre-tending.

Chandler (5) gives us three areas to understand in dramatic play:

1. Creative dramatics--the most organized form which can be of great help in the growth and development of the child
2. Dramatic play--the natural play of the child, where he re-enacts his own experiences and observations. This will be in play and conversation of the child as he pretends to be---family people, community helpers, health helpers, and school helpers

3. Imitative play--an aspect of rhythms or song play, which is usually the active, non-verbal imitation of animals, flowers, and other things in nature including how they sound

More support comes fror Gillis (8) who presents some basic creative dramatic principles to observe when working with all children:

1. Tuning in senses
2. Listening and recording
3. Pantomine, rhythm, and movement
4. Presenting a story
5. Discussion and constructive criticism
6. A child who is open

Burton (1) writes that originality and creativity have been recognized and honored at the scfentific research and technical education level, so today the school is placing emphasis upon an opportunity for creative expression from kindergarten to college, and that development of personality is achieved through efforts of creative expression, for creative expression is basic to good living.

Weikart, Rogers, Adcock and McClelland (26) incorporated in their Cognitively Oriented Curriculum a conception of the nature and function of play as derived from Smilansky(23), but is based on Piaget's (22) theories.

Smilansky (23) believes that the most important thing besides loving children is for adults to give them meaningful ways to interpret and deal with the world. Piaget's views serve as a background for these beliefs. For his principles are: first, that the child's language and thought are different from the adult's Language and thought; secondly, children need to manipulate things in order to learn; thirdly, children are most interested and learn best when experiences are moderately novel; fourthly, the child's thought progresses

through a series of stages, each of which contains distinctive strengths and weaknesses; and fifthly, children should talk in school, should argue and debate, for social interaction, when it is centered about relevant physical experience promotes intellectual growth. (17) The Cognitively Oriented Curriculum uses this as its framework and Smilansky's (23) views blend very easily into the Cognitively Oriented Curriculum.

Smilansky's criteria for socio-dramatic play are: (23)

1. A child should be interacting with a least one other person
2. Make-believe roles are taken by each child
3. These roles are expressed in imitative action and verbalizations
4. Actions and verbalization substitute for real objects and concrete situations
5. There is sustained verbal interaction related to the play episode
6. The play episode persists for upwards of 10 minutes

Smilansky believes that this form of play is taught in middle-class homes. Her rules of thumb for teaching sociodramatic play are:

1. The themes chosen for socio-dramatic play must allow for roles for both sexes
2. These themes should appeal to children
3. The child should have some basis in his experiences for relating to the roles and behaviors required in the play situation.

Weikart, Rogers, Adcock, and Mcclelland (26) state that the major goals in using sociodramatic play as a teaching device are to develop the concentration and attention skills of the child, to intergrate scattered experiences, and to enable the child to consider possibilities in his mind as well as with his hands; that is, to engage in make-believe rather than depend wholly on toys.

A play period of sociodramatic activities establishes a secure time, place, and environment for testing the child's creative skills with new experiences. Weikart, Rogers, Adcock, and McClelland (26) outline some specifics for setting the tone for sociodramatic play, which are similar to role playing including opportunities for imaginative play:

(a) Social interaction; e.g. at least two children involved in some interaction

(b) Verbal communication

(c) Fantasy

(1) Make-believe about roles

(2) Make-believe about situations

(3) Make-believe about objects

(d) Toys are reduced to tools; i. e. props

(e) Play continues for at least 10 minutes

They indicate further that in order to teach children how to become involved in sociodramatic play the teacher observes the children in terms of the criteria cited; that if children are not fulfilling all these criteria, the teacher then introduces the missing ones singly, for example: if verbal communication and fantasy are missing only one should be added to the play situation any one time; that the teacher can help to initiate sociodramatic play by using field trips as a basis for school play situation, for example: when the children return from a trip to the fire station, the materials used should be suggestive rather than real, that is, a garden hose could represent the fireman's hose, a slide could stand for the pole down which the fireman slides, and wagons could be used as fire trucks; and that children should be encouraged to select the roles which they want to take, for example: they may all want to be firemen, but each fireman should have a different task--

some firemen cook; some firemen drive trucks; some firemen answer telephone; some firemen wash the trucks; that the teacher should also take a role in the dramatic play, at least until the children can carry the play on their own, and that once the children are able to set up their own play situation, select their own roles, and engage in the total activity according to the criteria listed, the teacher can diminish her role playing as well as her assistance.

When working with disadvantaged children, Smilansky (23) found that the disadvantaged child does not lack experiences; but is unable to blend different experiences, understand their meaning, and enploy them in the solution of problems which are confronted in various situations. Play then is children's best medium for allowing free passage of experiences. Play then can serve as an excellent medium for assisting the child in forming new cognitive concepts and strategies. Play then has a role similar to that of language; that is, play alone cannot effect cognitive development, but can be used as means for promoting cognitive development. She explains further, that the most important phase of sociodramatic play is the explicit or definite cycle of planning, doing, and evaluating that the supporters of the model used in setting up the sociodramatic play situation. It is through these activities that intellectual growth results from the child's capacity to employ sociodramatic play as a tool.

Sponseller (15) considers using first hand experiences with children as a manysided instrument for supporting children in the realization of their power as the actuator in the learning process. He concludes that the learning process can happen in a context of playfulness. The underlying fabric of skillful teaching and loving parenting of young children to follow, to to mediate without intinteruption and misrepresentation, which demands

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that adults who bring special capacities for playfulness as well as reverance for their relationship with children. Considering the problems of play may be as much the adults' problems as they are the children's problems. As adults learn to interpret children's play and its significance most likely we will understand play as promising rather than as a problematic uncertainty. The questions we should keep in mind are:

1. Is play a learning medium?
2. Is play recreational
3. Is play educational
4. Does play enhance intellectual skills as a learning medium?
5. How can play serve as a curriculum tool?
6. How can teachers facilitate learning and development through play?

This study of Dr. Anderson's appear to have stimulated thought and left the field wide open for more experimentation through involvement of children in sociodramatic play.

Marzello and Lloyd (13) explain that children love to imitate grownups, and as they do, they learn about involvement and how to be a responsible person with special tasks to perform. induce children to try out new roles and n new involvements. Stress your role as the supplyer of props--the child will do the pretending, if you put the essential materials in his hands. It is a wise thought to keep in mind play kits or props for young children as:

1. Restaurant kit
2. Kitchen Kit
3. School kit
4. Supermarket kit
5. Disguise kit
6. Post Office kit
7. Cleaning kit

8. Hospital kit

9. Detective kit

Creativity seems to be a natural spontaneous trait in most children. Progenitors who wish their offsprings to be creative should show concern not for teaching it, but with nourishing and supporting the creative spirit which is already there.

Conclusions can be drawn that comfortable adjustment in their human behavior and relationships with each other can be observed and attained through personal one to one relationships during sociodramatic exposures. Blackie (2) thinks that not withstanding the fact that all educators now are aware of the significance of play in the learning process, and that if parents were to scrutinize their children's play activities, they would find that play is more than letting off excess energy. And like Stone (16) they would ask, how do children play? And answer, that if you would spend a day hidden in the bushes near a playground, you would watch unfold the myraid answers to the question posed. Then you could sum it up in two words: action and contemplation. And you would agree with Osmon (14) that dramatic play is a natural activity of children, which serves as an instrument of growth for children. Miller (12) directs our attention to the fact that simple, natural, and inexpensive things are the most fun, when they are movable and/ or adaptable. Matterson (10) agrees that imaginative play exists in the mind and needs very little tangible materials. Its greatest value lies in providing scope for working out situations and emotions and solving small problems. Henry (9) agrees that what creative dramatics does here for a child's use of words is to bring in new words immediately into his speaking vocabulary from experiences. Cuffaro(6) and Winsor (18) who use materials in their sociodramatics play set up all

understand that the child needs an autonomous and active role in the learning process; that play is the medium through which the child's experiences can be expre expressed and organized; that in dramatic play the script is created out of the child's totality of experiences, and that dramatic play is a play always in rehearsal and on-going production.

Piaget (22) contends that intelligence tends towards an equilibrium beween assimilation and accommodation. Imitation is the continuation of accommodation to which it subordinates assiimilation. Play on the other hand, is a kind of free assimilation without accommodation to spatial conditions or to the significance of objects.

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